



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION IX
75 Hawthorne Street
San Francisco, CA 94105

June 9, 2006

Michael Fink
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Los Angeles District
Arizona/Nevada Area Office
3636 North Central Avenue, Suite 900
Phoenix, Arizona 85012-1936

Subject: Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Rio Salado Oeste Feasibility Study Report (CEQ# 60170)

Dear Mr. Fink:

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has reviewed the DEIS referenced above. Our review is pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508), and Section 309 of the Clean Air Act.

The primary purpose of this restoration project is to improve the ecological condition of an eight-mile segment of the Salt River. The project will restore 1,466 acres of riparian habitat along the River and is one of four ecosystem restoration projects in various stages along the Salt River. Maricopa County has undergone tremendous growth in the last few decades which has degraded the river system directly and indirectly through groundwater contamination, overdraft, and sedimentation. Therefore, we are supportive of these restoration projects and we have rated the DEIS as Lack of Objections (LO) (see enclosed "Summary of Rating Definitions").

The proposed alternative will restore 375 acres of cottonwood/willow, 417 acres of mesquite, 326 acres of wetlands, 296 acres of riparian scrub, and 52 acres of scrub-shrub habitat (p. ES-3). The Corps has proposed mitigation for the impacts to vegetation, air emissions, and water quality associated with the proposed alternative. In addition, the Final EIS (FEIS) should discuss adaptive management plans to meet mitigation requirements associated with the Clean Water Act Section 401 and 404 permits as well as the Endangered Species Act Section 7 consultation, as these processes have yet to be completed.

We appreciate the opportunity to review this DEIS. When the FEIS is released for public review, please send (2) copies to the address above (mailcode: CED-2). If you have any questions, please contact me at 415-972-3988 or Summer Allen, the lead reviewer for this project at 415-972-3847 or allen.summer@epa.gov.

Sincerely,

/S/

Duane James, Manager
Environmental Review Office

Main ID # 4827

Enclosure: Summary of EPA's Rating Definitions